

# **APPENDIX D**

## **APPLICATION OF THE NATURAL SYSTEM MODEL TO THE ST. LUCIE WATERSHED**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Biological investigations of the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries led to an understanding of the relationship between important communities and flow from the watershed. This understanding formed the bases for the salinity envelope concept in which desired minimum and maximum mean monthly flow limits to the estuaries were defined with an “acceptable” number of violations of these limits. The scientific justification for these acceptable violations is weak and, therefore, needs additional investigations. It has been demonstrated with the optimization model that the amount of retention/detention needed in the watershed to obtain the desired flow to the estuaries is sensitive to the number of acceptable violations allowed, especially the upper violations. Basically, the greater amount of violations allowed, the less retention is needed in the watershed. Therefore, further insights in to the acceptable number of violations may have a major influence on the proposed amount of retention needed in the St. Lucie Estuary watershed. In addition, the effort to establish minimum flows and levels (MFLs) for the estuary is dependent on documenting significant levels of harm of low and high flow. This MFL effort needs to clearly demonstrate the potential impact of flows outside of the salinity envelope. Therefore, it is important to gain a better insight of the “acceptable” violations for several major South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD or District) concerns dealing with watershed management of the St. Lucie Estuary.

Two approaches to gaining a better understanding of the acceptable number of violations have been suggested. Both embrace the need to determine the natural distribution of flows to the estuary. The Peace River has a well defined historical flow record and has minimal impact from development. Therefore, the distribution of flows from this estuary will be determined and compared with suggested distribution of flows for the St. Lucie Estuary. Another method of determining the distribution of flows under natural conditions can be obtained by applying the Natural System Model (NSM) to the St. Lucie watershed. The NSM has been used successfully to simulate the predrainage condition in other parts of the District. This report summarizes the application of the NSM to the St. Lucie watershed.

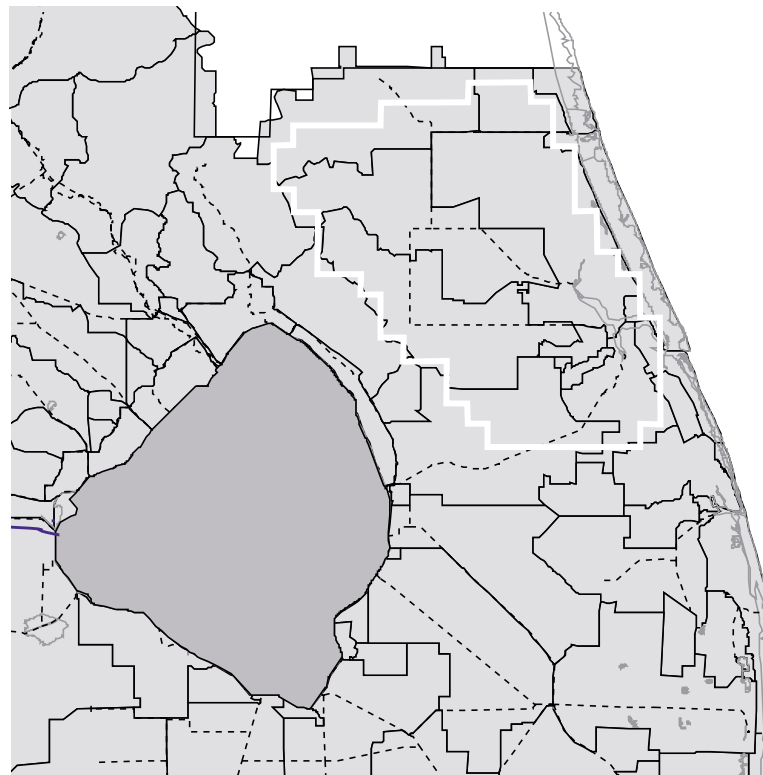
### **MODEL SPECIFICATIONS**

The NSM is a two-dimensional coupled surface-ground water model that incorporates the dominant physical processes affecting hydrology in South Florida. The model domain is discretized into grid cells, and the spatial properties required to simulate each of the hydrologic processes are estimated for each cell. Spatial properties include vegetation/landscape type, land surface elevation, aquifer depth and permeability, soil

storage coefficient, and initial water level. Similarly, rivers are discretized into linear segments, and properties associated with each of the rivers are estimated. River properties include river location and dimension, outlet specifications, and coefficients for river to overland flow and river to aquifer interaction.

## Model Domain

The domain of the St. Lucie NSM includes the areas that under “natural” conditions would have been drained by the St. Lucie River and its tributaries. The St. Lucie watershed includes portions of the following surface water management basins: C-23, C-24, C-25, C-44, North Fork St. Lucie River, and Tidal St. Lucie. The model boundary is generally aligned along surface water basin boundaries or in areas where surface water movement is low (**Figure D-1**). The principle outlets for excess water are the North and South Forks of the St. Lucie River, which in turn discharge to the St. Lucie Estuary.



Notes:

- Surface water management basins delineated by solid black lines
- Model domain delineated by white line
- Primary canals delineated by dashed lines

**Figure D-1.** Natural Systems Model Boundary Map for the St. Lucie Watershed

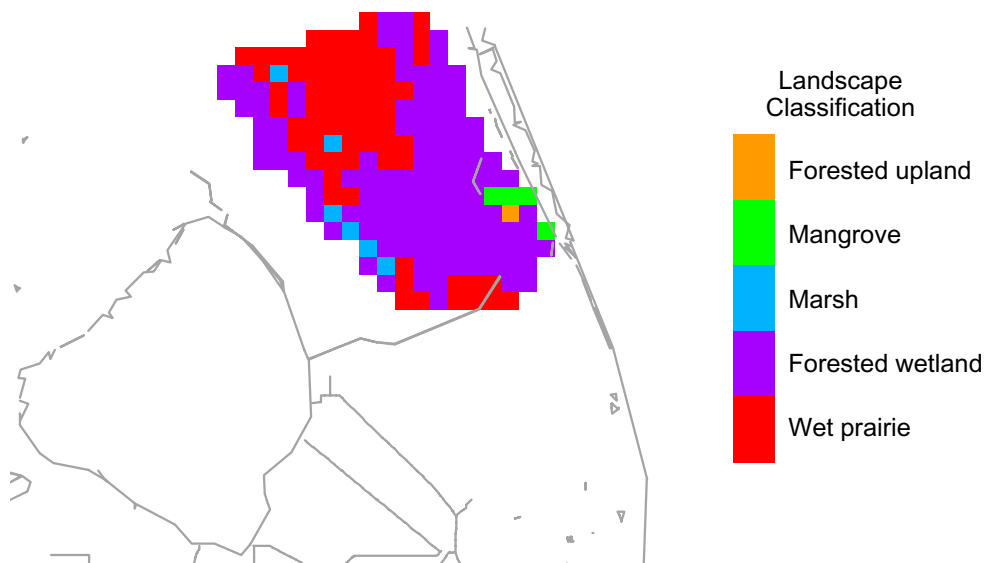
## Vegetation

Cell vegetation type is based on soils information, specifically the Natural Landscape Position coverage (Zahina et al., 2001). The landscape classification is consistent with definitions contained in the NSM developed for South Florida. Five landscapes are identified in the St. Lucie watershed (**Table D-1**).

**Table D-1.** Landscape Classifications Used in the Natural Systems Model.

No.	Landscape	Description	Percent Area
1	Mangrove	Low coastal areas dominated by mangrove swamps with saltwater to brackish water marshes	2
2	Forested uplands	Pinelands on higher sands	1
3	Marsh	Fresh marshes outside the Everglades basin	3
4	Wet prairie	Mosaic landscape; sloughs densely filled with grasses; tree islands may be present	35
5	Forested wetlands	Cypress and hardwood swamps; wetter mosaics of pine flatwoods and depressional wetlands	59

The St. Lucie watershed lies with the Eastern Flatlands physiographic region. These flatlands had many shallow, usually just seasonally, wet ponds and long narrow sloughs (Davis, 1943). The characteristic landscape is either wet prairie or forested wetlands (**Figure D-2**). Model input parameter values for these landscape types are taken directly from the NSM (Version 4.5), whose parameter values are imported directly from the calibrated and verified South Florida Water Management Model (SFWMD, 1999).



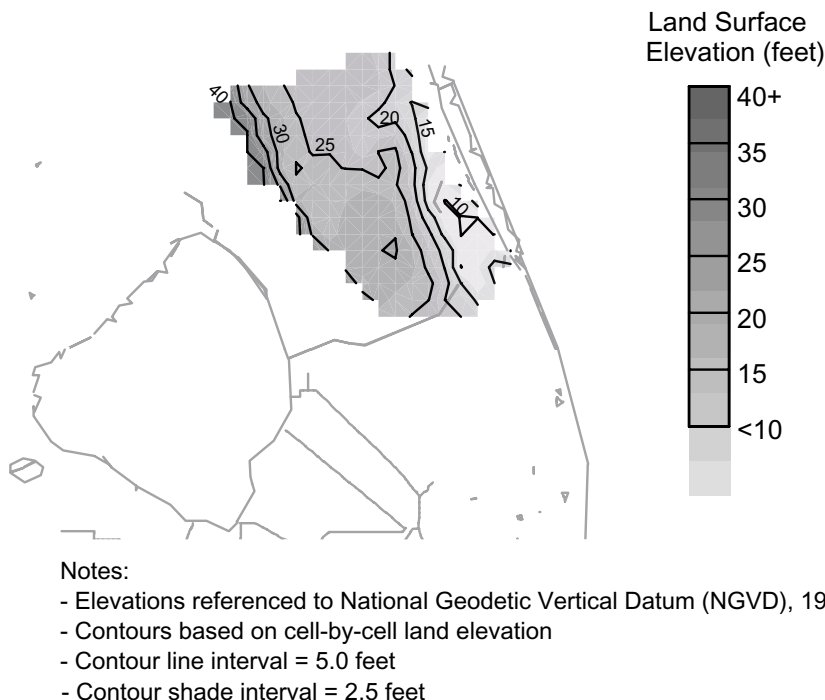
**Notes:**

- Landscape homogeneous with a cell
- Canals and levees included for points of reference

**Figure D-2.** Landscape Map for the St. Lucie Watershed

## Topography

Land surface elevation is based on available geographic information system (GIS) topographic coverages for this area. Land surface elevations in the St. Lucie watershed range from more than 60.0 feet along the western boundary to less than 4 feet near the St. Lucie Estuary (**Figure D-3**).



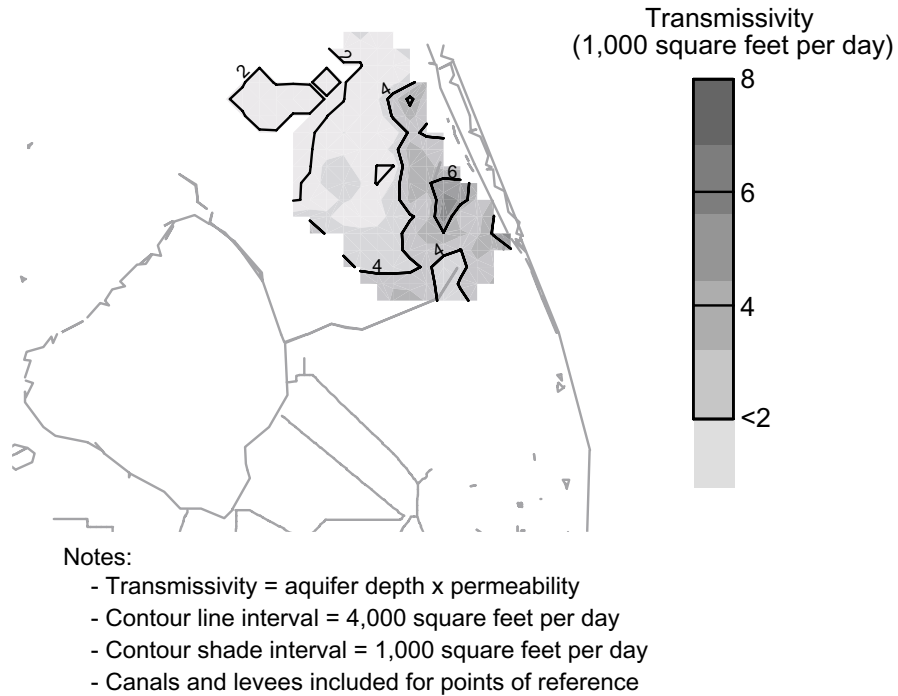
**Figure D-3.** Land Surface Elevation Map for the St. Lucie Watershed

## Surficial Aquifer

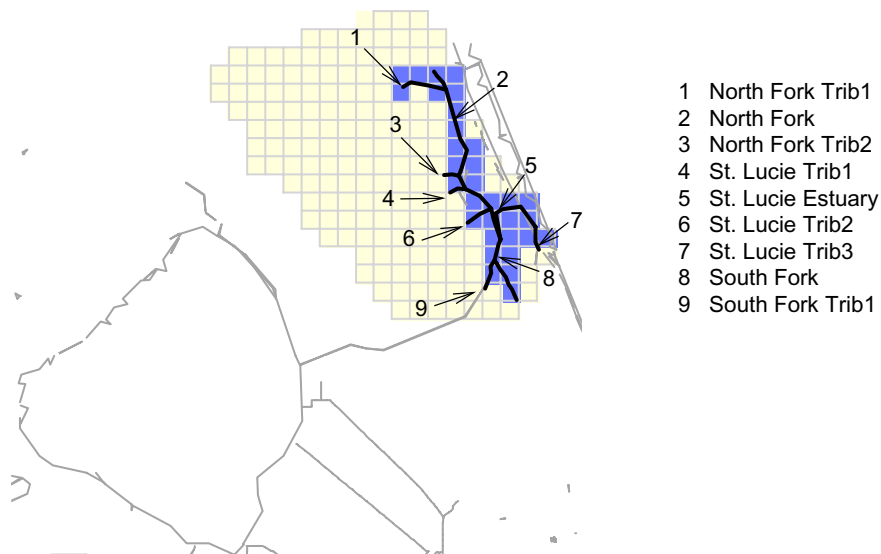
Surficial aquifer properties for each cell are defined by aquifer transmissivity and soil storage coefficient values. Transmissivity is the product of aquifer depth and aquifer permeability, and ranges between 1,000 to 8,000 square feet per day (**Figure D-4**). Soil storage coefficient is uniformly set to 0.2 feet per foot

## Rivers

The St. Lucie watershed contains rivers and creeks which cannot be represented by the relatively coarse two-by-two mile grid. These surface features are discretized into linear segments, and the impacted cells or river cells, are identified (**Figure D-5**). Outflow from a river is discharged to tide or to another river. Although much of the river system in the St. Lucie watershed has been excavated, the river location can be approximated from existing hydrography coverages.



**Figure D-4.** Aquifer Transmissivity Map for the St. Lucie Watershed



**Figure D-5.** Model Grid and River Location Map used in the Natural Systems Model for the St. Lucie Watershed

## Initial Condition

The initial condition is established in the NSM by setting the initial water level in each cell and in each segment of the rivers. Initial cell water levels are set by uniformly setting the surface water ponding depth in marsh cells.

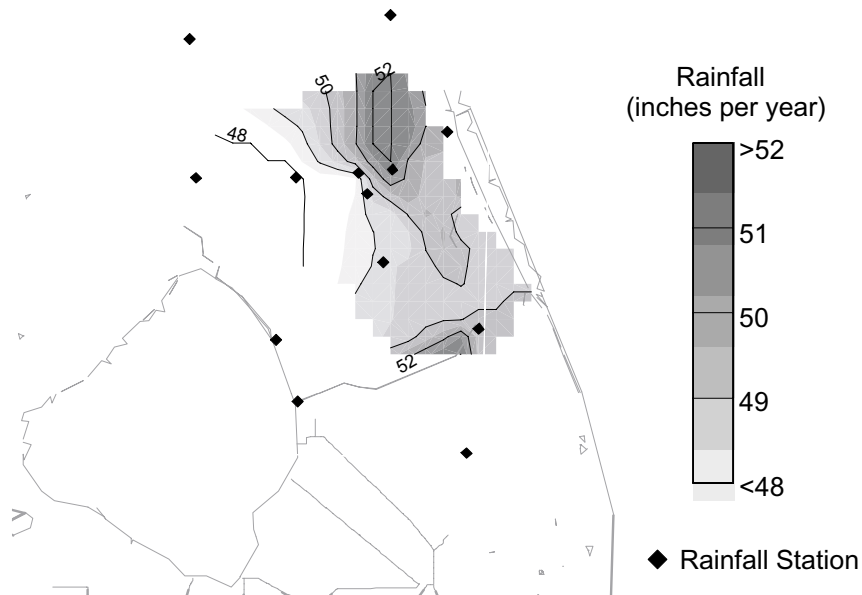
## BOUNDARY CONDITIONS

Water levels in the model domain fluctuate in response to transient boundary conditions that are imposed on selected cells. Boundary conditions represent external driving functions that cause water to be added or removed from the model domain. Hydrology in South Florida is primarily driven by rainfall and evapotranspiration (Fennema et al., 1994). These boundaries are applied on a daily basis to every cell in the model domain.

### Rainfall

The rainfall database consisted of 13 stations that reported data during the 1965 to 1997 simulation period (**Figure D-6**). Since data records may not be continuous at each station, daily rainfall for each cell is based on the nearest station with data.

Rainfall in South Florida varies seasonally, with distinct wet and dry seasons. Wet season rainfall results predominately from convective and tropical storms and dry seasons rainfall comes primarily from frontal systems. Rainfall also varies spatially, ranging from less than 47 inches per year in the extreme western cells to more than 56 inches per year along the coastal ridge (Sculley, 1986).



**Notes:**

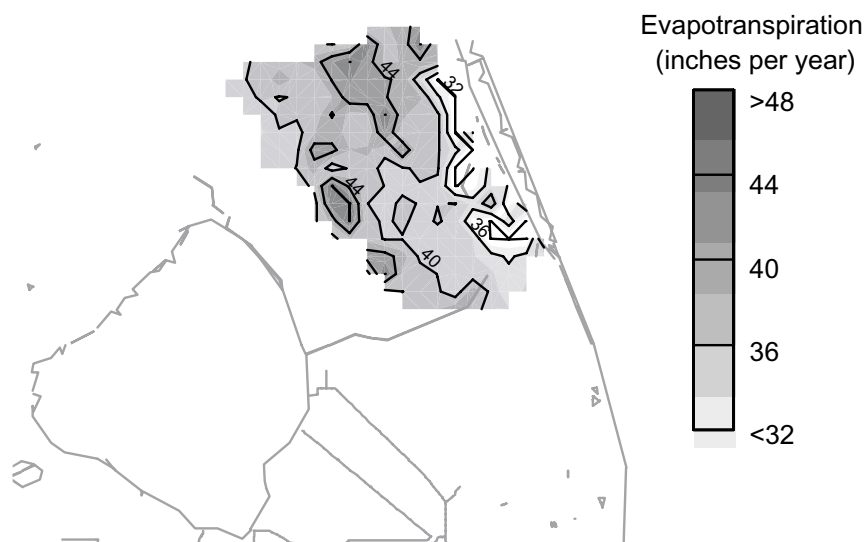
- 1965 to 1997 simulation period
- Diamond symbols indicate location of rainfall stations
- Contour line interval = 1.0 inches
- Contour shade interval = 0.5 inches
- Canals and levees included for points of reference

**Figure D-6.** Average Annual Rainfall within the St. Lucie Watershed

## Potential Evapotranspiration

Daily potential evapotranspiration is estimated across the model domain using the computed potential evapotranspiration from two stations: Canal Point and Fort Pierce. Potential evapotranspiration at Canal Point (located along the eastern edge of Lake Okeechobee) is computed using a modified Penman-Monteith Method. Potential evapotranspiration at the Fort Pierce station (located in the northeastern region of the domain) is based on observed pan evaporation data. Potential evapotranspiration is generally higher at Fort Pierce (63.1 inches per year) than Canal Point (57.6 inches per year). Potential evapotranspiration estimates from these two stations are weighted equally to compute the potential evapotranspiration at the individual cells.

“Actual” evapotranspiration is computed in the model, and is based on potential evapotranspiration and a crop coefficient. Crop coefficients combine the effects of vegetation type, seasonality, and water availability. Actual evapotranspiration ranges from less than 20 inches per year in the overdrained cells near the South Fork of the St. Lucie River to more than 48 inches per year in the marsh areas to the southwest (**Figure D-7**).



**Notes:**

- 1965 to 1997 simulation period
- Contour line interval = 4.0 inches
- Contour shade interval = 2.0 inches
- Canals and levees included for points of reference

**Figure D-7.** Average Annual Rainfall Map for the St. Lucie Watershed

## HYDROLOGIC PROCESSES

Water is distributed within the model domain in response to hydrologic processes. Processes are modeled independently within each time step, with more transient phenomena computed before less transient phenomena. River flow is computed first, followed by overland flow, infiltration, evapotranspiration, and ground water flow. Rainfall is added to the model by increasing surface water depth in each cell at the beginning of a time step. The equations used to represent each of the hydrologic processes will not be presented here. However, the relevant parameters for each of the hydrologic processes are presented.

### Infiltration and Evapotranspiration

Vertical movement of water within a cell is simulated by infiltration and evapotranspiration processes. Infiltration rates are uniformly set to a very high level, preventing the formation of perched water tables. Evapotranspiration is a function of potential evapotranspiration, monthly crop coefficient (**Table D-2**), and threshold depths to the water table (**Table D-3**).

**Table D-2. Monthly Evapotranspiration Coefficients**

Landscape	Month											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Mangrove	.79	.76	.83	.86	.88	.88	.88	.90	.90	.82	.80	.75
Upland Forest	.74	.72	.77	.77	.78	.78	.81	.82	.82	.76	.77	.75
Marsh	.81	.77	.81	.82	.83	.83	.83	.85	.84	.80	.78	.78
Wet Prairie	.72	.70	.72	.74	.74	.74	.74	.75	.75	.73	.73	.70
Wetland Forest	.72	.70	.74	.75	.77	.76	.77	.79	.79	.74	.77	.74

**Table D-3. Threshold Water Depths**

Landscape	Open Water (feet)	Shallow Root Zone (feet)	Deep Root Zone (feet)
Mangrove	6.5	0.0	4.0
Upland Forest	6.0	4.25	10.0
Marsh	5.0	0.0	4.5
Wet Prairie	4.5	0.0	4.5
Wetland Forest	5.0	0.0	8.0

### Overland Flow

The overland flow process simulates the surface water movement between adjacent cells. Manning's equation is used to estimate resistance to flow. Parameters for the Manning's equation are presented in **Table D-4**. The detention depth is the ponding depth below which no overland flow occurs.



**Table D-4. Overland Flow Parameters**

<b>Landscape</b>	<b>Manning's Coefficient</b>	<b>Manning's Exponent</b>	<b>Detention Depth</b>
Mangrove	0.95	-0.77	0.1
Upland Forest	0.85	0.00	0.1
Marsh	1.15	-0.77	0.1
Wet Prairie	1.20	-0.77	0.1
Wetland Forest	0.16	-0.77	0.1

## Ground Water Flow

Ground water flow is simulated by solving for ground water level in a finite difference approximation of flow in unconfined aquifers, using transmissivity values illustrated in **Figure D-4**. A zero gradient ground water boundary condition is imposed by establishing “imaginary” cells outside the model domain, adjacent to each boundary cell. These external cells have the same transmissivity and head values as their model domain counterparts.

## River Flow

The river flow process simulates the influence of rivers on water levels in adjacent cells. River cells are identified by the presence of a river segment within the cell (**Figure D-5**). Rivers are modeled as storage volumes, based on river length and width, and depth above a downstream weir that establishes the control elevation (**Table D-5**).

**Table D-5. River Specifications**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>River</b>		<b>Weir Crest</b>		<b>Outlet</b>
		<b>Width (feet)</b>	<b>Slope (feet)</b>	<b>Elevation (feet)</b>	<b>Width (feet)</b>	
1	North Fork Trib1	1,000	4.0	9.0	80	North Fork
2	North Fork	2,000	0.0	3.0	320	St. Lucie Estuary
3	North Fork Trib2	500	0.0	6.0	80	North Fork
4	St. Lucie Trib1	250	0.0	4.0	80	St. Lucie Estuary
5	St. Lucie Estuary	4,000	0.0	2.0	2,000	tide
6	St. Lucie Trib2	500	1.0	3.0	80	St. Lucie Estuary
7	St. Lucie Trib3	750	0.0	4.0	160	St. Lucie Estuary
8	South Fork	500	2.0	3.0	320	St. Lucie Estuary
9	South Fork Trib1	180	2.0	7.0	80	South Fork

## RESULTS

The original NSM was developed to provide a better understanding of the predrained hydrology of the Everglades system in South Florida. Planning and restoration initiatives in South Florida have benefited from insights provided by the NSM. The purpose of this study is to use an “NSM-like approach” to gain a better understanding of the natural distribution of flows to the St. Lucie Estuary.

A NSM application includes the computer model itself, hydrologic parameters, static data, and time series data. If the computer model and hydrologic parameters developed for the original NSM (Version 4.5) are accepted as reasonable, then constructing a natural system model for the St. Lucie watershed is a modest effort requiring only static and time series data, which are readily available from previous modeling projects.

The results of the St. Lucie NSM should be viewed as preliminary and for comparison purposes only. The NSM was developed primarily for an Everglades system. Although similar landscapes exist in both model domains, additional work is required to verify that the hydrologic processes and associated parameters adequately represent the St. Lucie watershed.

### Regional Hydrology

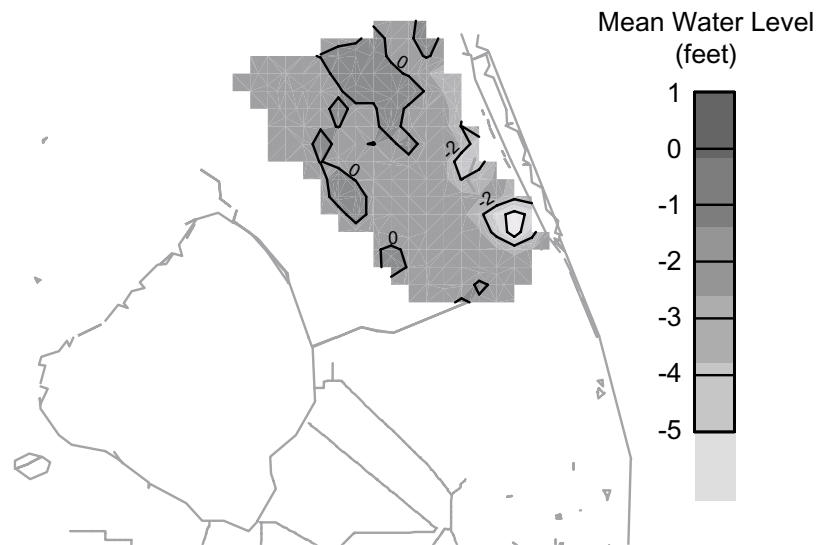
Surface flow in the upper two-thirds of the St. Lucie watershed is primarily directed toward the North Fork of the St. Lucie River (**Figure D-8**). The highest concentration of flow occurs near the western tributary of the North Fork. The lower third of the watershed is generally directed towards the South Fork of the St. Lucie River, with much smaller flow volumes.

Mean water levels in the St. Lucie watershed are generally within 1.0 foot of land surface (**Figure D-9**). Mean water levels are generally below land surface in the forested wetlands and above land surface in marshes and wet prairies (**Figure D-2**).

The duration of inundation can be assessed using hydroperiod maps, where hydroperiod is defined as the number of days per calendar year in which the water level in a cell is above land surface. The deep water areas in the wet prairies tend to have longer hydroperiods, ranging between 8 and 11 months (**Figure D-10**). Hydroperiods in western to central forested wetlands are shorter, generally ranging between 4 and 7 months. Hydroperiods in areas drained by the St. Lucie River and its tributaries are very short, generally less than 4 months.



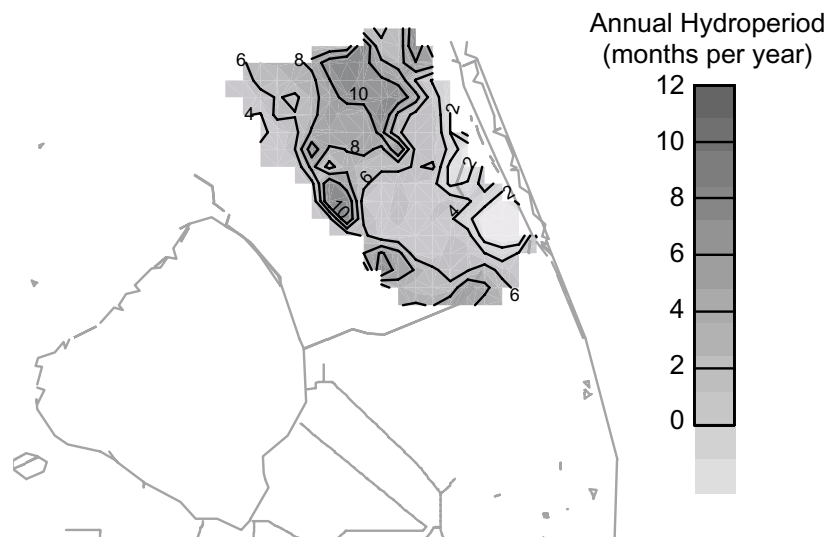
**Figure D-8.** Surface Flow Vector Map for the St. Lucie Watershed



## Notes:

- 1965 to 1997 simulation period
- Water levels referenced to land surface elevation
- Contour line interval = 2.0 feet
- Contour shade interval = 1.0 feet
- Canals and levees included for points of reference

**Figure D-9.** Mean Water Level Map for the St. Lucie Watershed



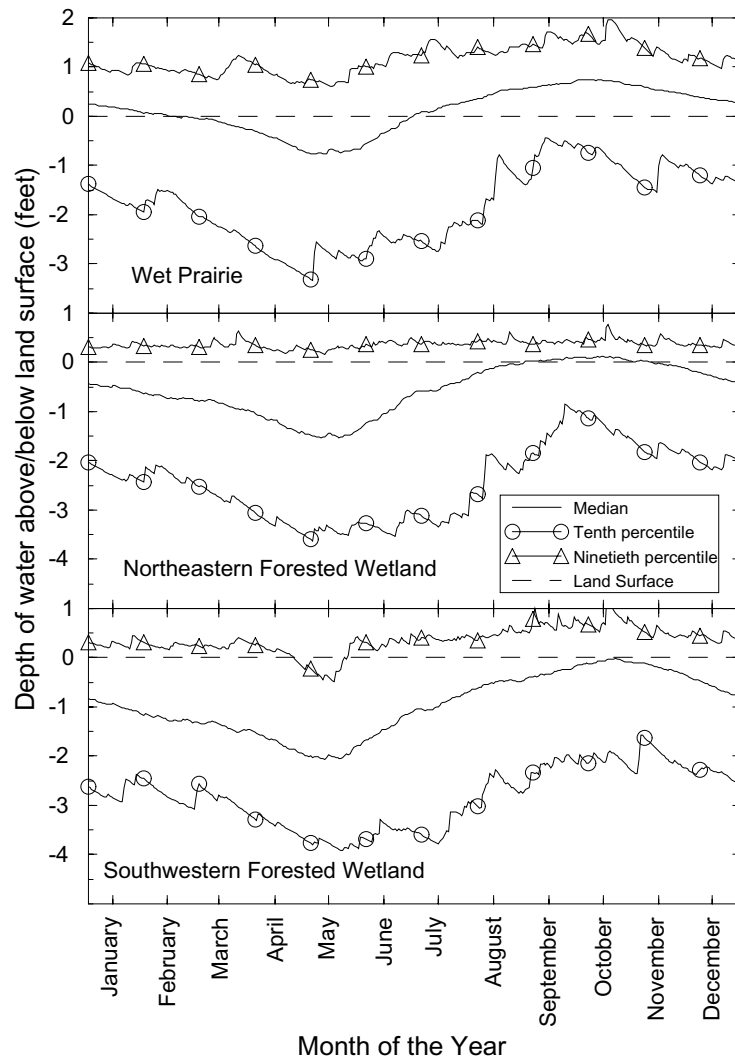
## Notes:

- 1965 to 1997 simulation period
- Hydroperiod = number of days of inundation per calendar year
- Contour line interval = 2 months
- Contour shade interval = 1 month
- Canals and levees included for points of reference

**Figure D-10.** Median Annual Hydroperiod Map for the St. Lucie Watershed

## Local Hydrology

The depth of water in adjacent cells may differ because of differences in relative topography, vegetation, and net rainfall. These localized effects can be minimized by computing the average depth of water for groupings of adjacent cells. Blocks of at least three-by-three cells were identified in the wet prairie, northeastern forested wetland, and southwestern forested wetland landscapes. Water depth in these blocks is the arithmetic average of the water depth simulated in the individual cells. Daily water depths for each block are sorted by calendar day, ranked in ascending order, and presented as percentiles in **Figure D-11**. These percentiles summarize the daily distribution of water depths across the 33-year simulation period. For example, the 50th percentile (or median) for January 1 is the water depth wherein 50 percent of the years report water levels less than this value. The median value is computed for each day of the year and the results are displayed as the median trace. Traces for the tenth and ninetieth percentiles are computed in the same manner.

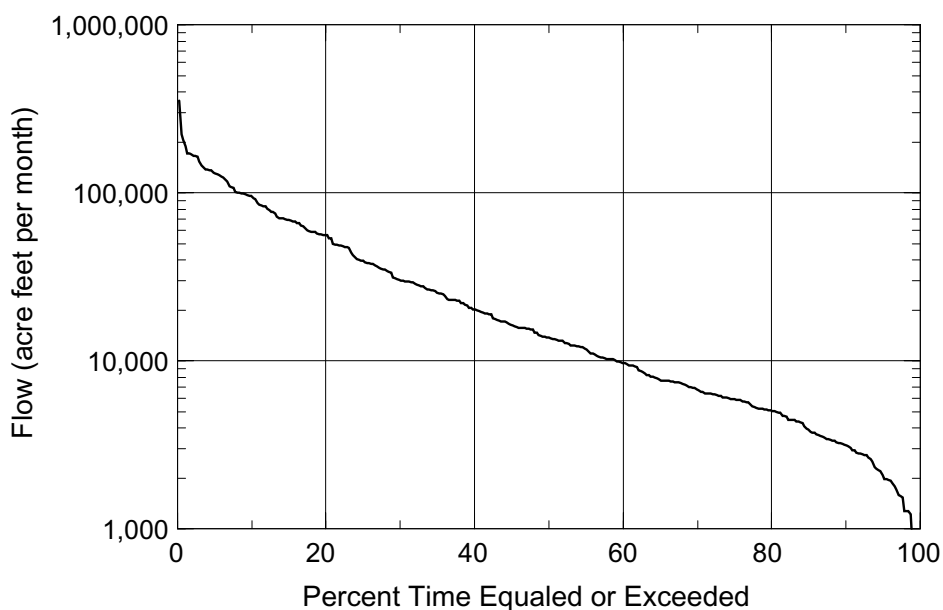


**Figure D-11.** Water Level Percentiles for the St. Lucie Watershed

Water levels in each of the landscapes can vary widely throughout the year, dropping as low as 4 feet below land surface in the forested wetlands to as high as 2 feet above land surface in the wet prairie. As previously noted, the wet prairies tend to be the wettest of the landscapes. The median water level trace is above land surface for all but four months near the end of the dry season.

## St. Lucie Estuary Inflow

The St. Lucie River system is represented in the model by five tributaries discharging into the St. Lucie Estuary, which in turn discharges to tide. Direct flow into the St. Lucie Estuary is estimated by summing the inflows from the North Fork, South Fork, and three smaller tributaries designated as Trib1, Trib2, and Trib3 (**Figure D-5**). The distribution of monthly flow is illustrated in **Figure D-12**. Monthly inflow into the St. Lucie Estuary (not including direct rainfall and evaporation on the estuary) ranges from 286 acre-feet per month to 365,000 acre-feet per month, with 90 percent of the inflows between 2,000 and 130,000 acre-feet per month.



**Figure D-12.** Distribution of Flow into the St. Lucie Estuary

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